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SUBJECT: CYPRUS: SPECIAL ADVISOR DOWNER ASSESSES SOLID
PROGRESS ON REUNIFICATION TALKS

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Special Advisor Downer told the Security Council on December 9 that there had been "solid progress" in reunification negotiations, which was mainly due to the "clear commitment" of Greek Cypriot President Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Talat to the process. Turkey called for the negotiations to be accelerated, and framed its support for the process in the context of the May 23, 2008 joint statement by the two leaders. Turkey also supported a tripartite meeting of the guarantor powers to discuss security aspects of a settlement. Ambassador Rice and most other Council members offered support for Downer's efforts, for an acceleration in the pace of the talks, and for confidence building measures that generate public support for a settlement. France, Russia and China supported the efforts of the two leaders, but not for Downer. Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Zerihoun recommended that the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) remain for an additional 6 months. He reported that most Turkish restrictions on the movement of UNFICYP personnel had been lifted, but remained for locally employed UN staff. All Council members except Turkey supported a six-month UNFICYP extension, though Japan and Costa Rica suggested the mission might be reconsidered in six-months if there is no settlement. END SUMMARY.

DOWNER BRIEFING

¶2. (SBU) The Security Council heard briefings on December 9 from the Secretary-General's Special Advisor, Alexander Downer, and Special Representative Taye Brook Zerihoun on the two UN missions in Cyprus. Downer, who leads the Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission, said there had been "solid progress" in the reunification negotiations, which was largely due to the commitment of Greek-Cypriot President Demetris Christofias and Turkish-Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat to the process. He said he was impressed with the determination of the two leaders to discuss difficult issues despite heavy public criticism. Downer believed the leaders were negotiating in good faith. Actual progress had been made on issues related to governance, the economy and the European Union, and Downer thought the leaders were close to an agreement on governance. Progress on property, territory and security had been slower, he said, although the two sides had recently produced their first joint paper on property, which categorized issues to be addressed. Referring to his role in the negotiations, Downer emphasized the UN was "not in the business of arbitrating or dictating a solution," but "we do what we can to help." He recognized that the negotiations were an "intensely political process," and the two leaders were cognizant of the need to negotiate in such a way that they could sell the solution to their respective constituencies. He underscored the importance of support for the process from the Security Council.

¶ 13. (SBU) Turkish Permrep Apakan said Turkey was committed to support the reunification talks, and he recalled the May 23, 2008 joint-statement of the two leaders, which he said formed the basis for the negotiations. Apakan called for the pace of the talks to be accelerated, noting that the SYG's report had said the "coming weeks and months" would be decisive. Apakan offered support for a tripartite meeting of the guarantor powers, to discuss security aspects of a settlement.

¶ 14. (SBU) Ambassador Rice underscored U.S. support for the Cypriot-led settlement process, and emphasized that the UN plays a critical role through the Good Offices Mission. She welcomed Mr. Downter's recent intensified involvement on the island, and his push for an additional series of back-to-back negotiating sessions to fully exploit the window of opportunity. Rice said it would be important to generate public support for a settlement, and she welcomed the progress achieved in the opening of the Limnitis/Yesilirmak crossing, recalling U.S. support for that effort.

¶ 15. (SBU) Most other Council members offered unqualified support for Downter and the Good Offices Mission. U.K. Permrep Lyall Grant said he recognized that the current negotiations were different from previous efforts to negotiate a solution, in that there would be no direct arbitration and no deadlines. However, he added that the process could not be open ended. He repeated the U.K. offer to give up half of its sovereign territory on the island, which the U.K. had publicly offered in November 2009 as an incentive for an agreement.

¶ 16. (SBU) France, Russia and China offered their full support for the efforts of the two leaders, but stopped short of

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welcoming Downter's efforts, instead acknowledging the "role" played by the SYG's Good Offices Mission. Russian Permrep Churkin said it was important for UN involvement "not to harm things," since it was "up to the parties themselves to carry out negotiations." All three members also emphasized that there should be no deadline for the completion of negotiations.

¶ 17. (SBU) Libyan Permrep Dabashi singled out Turkey's efforts to maintain momentum in the talks.

ZERIHOUN BRIEFING

¶ 18. (SBU) At the same meeting, SRSG Taye-Brook Zerihoun briefed the Security Council on the activities of UNFICYP, saying the situation was "calm and stable", and that both opposing forces had exercised restraint and had cooperated with UNFICYP. Zerihoun said military violations by the opposing forces had been "comparable", and that they had mainly occurred in the Nicosia old town. Zerihoun noted that UNFICYP's efforts to advance military confidence building measures had been largely unsuccessful, but he expressed satisfaction that Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces had lifted almost all restrictions on the movements of UNFICYP personnel. Zerihoun called for the immediate lifting of remaining restrictions on the movement of locally employed UN civilian personnel. Zerihoun told the Council UNFICYP continued to play a "vital and unique role" and recommended that the mandate should be extended for an additional six months.

¶ 19. (SBU) All Council members except Turkey supported a six-month UNFICYP renewal. Ambassador Rice, echoed by Mexico, said she looked forward to the UN carrying out contingency planning in relation to the settlement. Japanese Permrep Takasu suggested that if there is no progress in the negotiations, the Council should look at the UNFICYP mandate

in six months with a view to "allocating its very valuable assets" to more pressing peacekeeping needs. Costa Rica stressed that peacekeeping missions "should not turn into permanent entities."

10j. (SBU) Turkish Permrep Apakan said Turkey could not support an UNFICYP extension "for well-known reasons", and suggested it was instead time for an UNFICYP resolution that enjoyed the consent of both sides. He defended Turkish and Turkish Cypriot restrictions on the movement of UNFICYP locally employed staff, saying a 1964 status of forces agreement gave local staff a different status than international UN staff. Apakan also criticized the Secretary-General's report on UNFICYP as being one-sided.

RICE